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8 Fordwich Road
Welwyn Garden City
Herts
AL8 6EY

9th May 2012

Planning Officer, Mr Laird
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
Campus East
Welwyn Garden City

Dear Mr Laird

I live at 8 Fordwich Road and my neighbours at 6 Fordwich Road have submitted a planning application. These are my comments on that.

I had the opportunity to make a preliminary view of the plans for an extension for 6 Fordwich Road when I visited the council offices last week. These plans were, in some respects, an improvement on the previously planned conservatory. In particular, the plans were improved in respect of the fact that there was no overlooking of the adjacent property. Many efforts had been made to address the comments that were made on those earlier plans. This is appreciated.

Today I have limited time to view the plans, and my Internet connection is down. I would therefore like to make some general comments on the design and access statement and the biodiversity statement. Tomorrow, I would want to make some more detailed comments on the plans themselves, when I have been able to access them again in more detail. I hope you will be able to take these further comments into consideration, as I am aware that today is officially the last day of the consultation. This small accommodation would be appreciated. In general, I feel there is not enough detail about the proposed materials and insufficient attention to how the planned extension would affect the rest of the accommodation of 4 houses in the scheme and the parking for the scheme as a whole.

I would say in general that an extra bedroom would mean that parking and security arrangements should be given more thought than they have been offered in these plans. Also, I think a section of the extension is close to the party wall and I would like to give this further consideration. I also need to look again at the arrangements for access and how this would affect the side access point for 6 Fordwich Road, which provides an additional access point to the accommodation.

Regarding the general design and the biodiversity and design and access statement I thought that first of all there could have been more effort to capture the urban, natural and geological character of the area. We live very near to the railway line, to the east, and we are in the zone where motorway noise is an issue. So I would have thought that extra attention should be given to the sound-proofing aspect of the double glazing for the extension. This would also help to reduce the noise problem to 6 Fordwich Road from the constant piano playing at number 6. We are reasonably close to the site of the Welwyn Garden City Chieftain Burial that is displayed in the British Museum and Roman artefacts can sometimes be found in the area. So this should be given consideration when planning applications are submitted in the area. In addition, we live in a garden city, in a conservation area and in an area covered by the Estate Management Scheme, all of which need to be taken into account.

To the east, about a mile away, is the Lemsford Springs nature reserve, and to the south, Stanborough Lakes, the river Mimram, (I think) and the reed marsh at Stanborough Lakes, which I think is an area of Special Scientific Interest. Lemsford Springs provides a habitat for several species of rare birds, which also would visit our area from time to time. Urban foxes visit both my property and 6 Fordwich Road, and it is a concern that their chickens roam free in the garden where the foxes could easily reach them. An extra run for the hens would mean less time roaming at the mercy of the foxes.

As the garage is used for storage, it cannot accommodate a motor car and this puts extra pressure on the shared driveway area which has already caused a major neighbour dispute. For some years the Whites have not been on speaking terms with me as a result and I feel it is especially important to preserve and re-design good parking arrangements in order to prevent this situation from worsening and to prevent the quality of life for the 4 neighbours in this scheme to be affected. An extra bedroom could mean an additional occupant who would need parking. As my parking area is the one closest to the housing, I am most affected. Due to the restrictions that have been placed on parking on the road in the mornings, we now frequently need to park 2 cars on the driveway. The Whites now have a daughter of driving age, and one who is almost of the age to begin driving. As the daughter drives they have also needed additional parking. As the Whites cannot use their garage for parking, then they need more driveway space. In addition, the lamp-post has been placed in the middle of the section of 4 garages, so there is no crossover point there and the Whites have to use my driveway, or that of number 10 and 12, to get their car in and out. The lack of a crossover also affects 10 Fordwich Road.

There are four houses in the scheme, and 3 of these are set back from the road, meaning that they share a driveway area in the garage block of 4 garages. Also, traffic has increased since the scheme was first designed, and the driveway and parking area could benefit from being re-designed.

What I would like to see, is for the lamp-post to be moved, which is something that I think the county council would, from preliminary enquiries, be likely to agree to. Secondly, I would like the small path to be moved to the other side of the hedge. The path is placed alongside my parking space, and there is not sufficient room for the parking of my car and also the path. What I would like is for the hedge to be extended on the side, in order to close the gap in the hedge, so that part of the drive-way area can be used for parking only, like the other drive-ways. Then I would like to see whether we can move the lamp-post a few feet to the south and establish a cross-over that would serve all four households.

The path could be placed on the housing side of the beech hedge, and this path could then merge with the path that serves all four properties.

The hedge by the garages was lowered by the Whites, decreasing the amount of shade and screening to my car when parked there. I would like this hedge to grow back to its previous height in order to regain this screening.

Traffic to and from the Whites' house can be a problem. There is a constant stream of piano students who come to receive lessons at the Whites, where Mrs White is a piano tutor. I would like to know whether this concern has been registered with the council as a profit making venture and whether the appropriate tax is paid on any income received. In addition, the additional piano students have frequently caused inconvenience to me by blocking my driveway, making it difficult for me to park my car, causing constant stress and inconvenience. This is such a regular occurrence that I have begun to get to know the regular offenders. Surely the Whites could show some neighbourly consideration and could ask these regular visitors to park more thoughtfully.

A more properly considered parking facility for the four garages could do a considerable amount for the scheme as a whole and would do a great deal to improve the relationships between the neighbours. A small shed could provide some storage for the Whites' tools, and would free the garage for appropriate use as car parking. Consideration to the design of the parking area and allowing the hedge to grow to its previous height would reduce the tension between the neighbours and the constant use of my driveway as a walkway for the 4 households. An improved path could help serve the area to improve access for number 10 and 12 Fordwich Road. A cross over would provide better access to the road for 6 and 10 Fordwich Road.

Any extension to the property should take these into account. Finally the piano playing has in the past disturbed the sleep of the residents of 8 Fordwich Road, and some attention should be given to sound-proofing while there are general works being undertaken to the living room.

So, just to summarise. I believe that the plans are an improvement on the previous conservatory plans that were mooted. I have not had time to consider the access arrangements in sufficient detail but have made some comments on the need for good materials for the purpose of noise insulation. I also want to consider the scale of the development as a whole and to consider whether it would be in keeping with the neighbourhood. I believe that parking arrangements for the scheme of 4 households need to be comprehensively reviewed before this planning application can be approved. Such parking arrangements could be a part of the overall works proposed. I have outlined some of the changes I would like to see.

Sincerely

